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ABSTRACT

Intended for teachers to share with parents of school children, this paper presents techniques to encourage children to read during their summer vacations. The 21 suggestions for parents include the following: (1) model reading behaviors, (2) brainstorm with children to determine possible areas of interest, (3) read aloud to children, (4) allow children to buy a magazine of their choice at the supermarket, (5) establish a family custom of storytelling, (6) subscribe to a newspaper, (7) make a library area in the children's bedroom, (8) provide adequate lighting for children to read in bed, (9) set reading goals and offer rewards when the children meet those goals, (10) give children bookstore gift certificates, (11) demonstrate that the answers to children's questions can usually be found in print, (12) have children follow up televison programs by reading books on the program's topic or related subjects, (13) have children watch "Sesame Street" on television and subscribe to the program's magazine, (14) subscribe to magazines appropriate for the children's ages or grade levels, (15) ask children's teachers about books that will supplement their studies, and (16) read a book on the joy of reading and how parents can foster it in their children. (HTH)

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Encouraging Summer Reading:

21 Suggestions Teachers Can Share With Parents

As the summer doldrums take hold of children, predictably parents will be meeting their complaints of boredom with the suggestion, "Why don't you read something?"

This is good advice, but usually not enough to produce results. Parents may have to do some real work to get children reading. But the reward could be a lot more than just filling a few empty hours. Summer reading may introduce a child to a new way of enjoying life and give a permanent boost to his or her education.

Here are 21 suggestions teachers can share directly with parents who want to encourage their children to use some of those empty summer hours for reading:

1. Practice what you preach. Model the behavior you want your child to imitate. Let the child see you reading. As they do in all things, the child being urged to read will watch the parent's behavior for indications that reading is really important. Actions speak louder than words.

2. Have youngsters keep a log of their activities for three or four days to find hours which might be devoted to reading. Parents might do the same thing if they haven't found time to read. Parent and child can compare notes and then suggest "good times for reading" to the other.

3. Sit down with the child and "brainstorm" interests to find out what the youngster might be willing to read -- animal stories, humor, suspense, mysteries, westerns, romance, or whatever. The National Council of Teachers of English publishes extensive annotated book lists in paperback

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form for elemencary, junior high, and senior high youngsters. For more information, parents should write: National Council of Teachers of English, Urbana, Illinois, 61801. Ask for information describing their Adventuring With Books and High-Interest Easy Reading book lists.

4. Read to your children. This is an easy and enjoyable introduction to the wonders of books. Jim Trelease's The Read Aloud Handbook (Penguin paperback) suggests what and how to read aloud.

5. Take your children to the supermarket and allow them to buy one or more magazines of their choice. Perhaps this activity could serve as a reward for some house or yard work. Browsing for magazines may introduce children to reading related to model railroading, horses, cars, and other intriguing topics.

6. Establish a family custom of storytelling. Since the practice involves language and imagination, it is a natural stepping stone to reading. Stories may be invented or borrowed from any of the many books of folk tales and other stories. Try Whoppers: Tall Tales and Other Lies by Alvin Schwartz (Lippincott).

7. Subscribe to a good daily newspaper and make sure it's always on the breakfast table, available for browsing.

8. Make sure the child has a bedroom library, even if it is only books placed on top of cinder blocks and boards. A bedroom library sets books apart as items of value -- and also helps keep track of library books.

9. If the child goes to bed reluctantly, say, "Okay, you can stay up for awhile...if you read."

10. See to it that the child's bedroom has adequate lighting for reading in bed. A 100 watt bulb is the most common recommendation.

11. Set a goal for your child's reading for the remainder of the summer -- based upon your estimation of his or her capacity -- and offer a reward if it is reached. It's best to have the child set specific times for reading so the days do not slip by.

12. Give book store gift certificates for birthdays and other occasions. Suggest to relatives they do the same.

13. For younger children, use reading as a reward. "If you do such and such, I'll read you a story tonight."

14. When children ask questions, demonstrate that answers can usually be found in print. Rather than taking a guess at the cause of comets or how a color TV works, go to the encyclopedia. If the child asks "What's a turbo charger," see if you can pick up descriptive material from an automobile or farm implement dealer.

15. If the child enjoyed a television series or mini-series, see if it is not based upon a book, as many are, and consider picking up that book or one on the same subject. "Little House on the Prairie," adopted from a series of books, and the mini-series on George Washington are examples of television shows which might open a door to reading on the subject.

16. Buy a how-to book for the child on the latest craze -- jogging, automobiles, hair styling, or whatever.

17. Make sure your young child is watching Sesame Street on television. Subscribe to the Sesame Street Magazine. [Children's Television Workshop, 1 Lincoln Plaza, New York, NY 10023.]

18. For preschool and primary grade children, subscribe to Ranger Rick magazine (8925 Leesburg Pike, Vienna, VA 22180). World, the young people's

version of National Geographic, appeals to youngsters through junior high. Reader's Digest appeals to both junior high and senior high students.

19. When school starts again, talk to the teacher about books which would supplement the child's studies or which "all the kids are into". Basal readers and textbooks are minimum reading for children. Parents should carry on the campaign to get the child to go beyond them.

20. Read a book on the joy of reading and how parents can foster it. A Parents Guide to Children's Reading by Dr. Nancy Larrick is a Bantam paperback that has sold well over a million copies since its original printing.

The International Reading Association (800 Barksdale Road, Newark, Deleware 19714) publishes the following "idea booklets" for $.50 each:

What Books and Records Should I Get My Preschooler

How Can I Help My Child Build Positive Attitudes Toward Reading

How Can I Encourage My Primary Grade Child to Read

21. If your local library has a summer reading program that offers youngsters a certificate of recognition, ask your child to consider signing up.